

9/11 Health Bill Passes Key House Panel

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

Washington, D.C. - Today, U.S. Reps. Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler, Peter King, Michael McMahon, Eliot Engel, and Anthony Weiner applauded the House Health Subcommittee's passage with bipartisan support of the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, legislation that would provide comprehensive health care and compensation for the first responders and survivors who are sick because of the 9/11 attacks.

The House Health panel, which voted 25 to 8 in favor of the bill, has jurisdiction over the Zadroga Act's provisions to expand and make permanent existing federal programs to provide medical monitoring for those exposed to toxins released by the collapse of the World Trade Center towers, and treatment for 9/11-related illnesses and injuries. Last July, the House Judiciary Committee approved with bipartisan support the bill's provisions to reopen the federal Victim Compensation Fund.

"Today, the Zadroga Act took a giant step closer to the finish line," said Rep. Maloney. "It's been nine long years since the attacks. With today's vote, Congress is finally stepping up to the plate to provide long-term health care for the heroes and survivors of 9/11. We have a moral responsibility to care for those who lost their health because of the attacks on America --it's simply the least this great nation can do. I applaud Chairman Pallone for guiding this bill to passage in his subcommittee, and I thank him for his leadership and dedication to this noble cause. We hope to get the Zadroga Act to the floor of the House in the near future, following approval by the full Energy and Commerce Committee."

"Today's vote was a crucial test for the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act and I'm very pleased to note that it passed handily," said Nadler. "While the struggle for justice for the brave responders and survivors of 9/11's toxic aftermath has been painfully slow, today we are one important step closer to providing them the health care and compensation they need and deserve. I am grateful for the sacrifice and patience of all of those who are sick because of their exposure to Ground Zero's contaminated air. I thank Chairman Pallone for his critical role in moving this bill through the legislative process."

"Today's vote to pass the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act through the Energy And Commerce Health Subcommittee has brought us one step closer to granting the heroes of September 11th access to the treatment they need," said Rep. King. "Those exposed to the toxins have suffered for over eight years as illnesses from their exposure have developed and worsened. I applaud today's passage of this bill and will do whatever it takes to make sure it continues to move quickly through Congress and become law."

"I want to first extend my thanks to the many first responders who traveled down to Washington to attend the subcommittee markup today," said Rep. McMahon. "I want to also extend my gratitude to the many Members on both sides of the aisle who stood in solidarity with New York and its heroes. To the Members who sought to obstruct this bill from moving forward, I say shame on you. Make no mistake, these men and women put their lives at risk for all of us. Every single American was down in rubble with them on those days after 9/11 because it wasn't just New York that was attacked that day. Our country, our beliefs, our way of life were attacked. These first responders represent the best of humanity. They have earned the right to comprehensive health care, period. And my colleagues and I are committed to making sure that Congress delivers for them."

Cong. Eliot Engel said, "September 11 was a tragedy not just for New York, but for the entire nation. That day, and the days which followed, provided examples of bravery and national pride which were inspiring. Within minutes of the attack, New York's first responder mobilized to save those trapped in the World Trade Center, putting their lives in unspeakable danger, with sadly, far too many of them never making it out alive. Within days, Americans rose up in our hour of need and came to Ground Zero to help. We cannot help those that are already lost, but we can help the thousands who are sick. We must do what is right and show them that their selflessness is shared by the rest of the nation. This legislation will accomplish that and I plan to continue working to have it eventually passed by the full House. I look forward the day when President Obama signs this legislation into law. It is certainly long overdue."

"To say that today's vote is good news is an understatement," Weiner said. "These benefits are long overdue, and I look forward to the day—hopefully very soon—when this bill is on the president's desk, ready to be signed. The men and women who lived and worked near the World Trade Center on 9/11 deserve nothing less. I thank my colleagues for their hard work on this issue, but more importantly, I thank those who risked their lives to save their fellow Americans on that fateful day."